



Elsewhere

TalkED Team

Elsewhere

A Teaser

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Manila, Philippines

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*for those who enable others
to let their light shine*



Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier
Church of St Ignatius, Boston College

*“The World is a book,
and those who do not travel
read only a page.”*

SAINT AUGUSTINE
Bishop of Hippo



Giant magnifying glass at the Harvard Science Center.

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Elsewhere

A Teaser





The TalkED Team at the Tercentenary Theatre with the Widener Library in the background.



Top L-R: Monty Ngan, Jian Chan, Ethan Chua
Bottom L-R: Matthew/Ramin Tan, Kevin Tan, William Alonzo

INTRODUCTION

by Peter Martin D. Gomez

Roughly half a year ago, a group of impassioned high school seniors from Xavier School in Manila, Philippines, travelled to the United States to present their venture in various institutions such as the United Nations, companies like Google, IBM, Wired and Box, and in universities that included Stanford, UC Berkeley, MIT and Harvard.

I write this piece today, from the majestic Locker reading room at Harvard University's Widener Library. The Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library, named after a son of Harvard who was a passenger aboard the Titanic and had a penchant for collecting some of the world's finest books, is the largest library building in the Harvard College Library system. It houses the Widener collection, including one of only 21 complete copies of the Gutenberg Bible. Often, visitors and Harvard affiliates alike have the facade of Widener as their background in photos. Today, we look at the world from Widener's view.

Looking out through the wide series of window panels graced by intricately carved marble frames, we see the Memorial

Church directly across Widener, with the Memorial Hall towering in the background. To the right is Sever Hall where classes and lectures are held. Its other side faces the Harvard Art Museums across the street. To the left is University Hall, home of the deans of Harvard College, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. On University Hall's opposite side, we find the John Harvard statue and a huge flag of the United States hanging above it. Whatever you do, please do not touch the shoe. The statue faces the Old Yard leading to the Johnson Gate, considered the main gate of Harvard Yard.

Before we completely escape to Harvard Square, let's go back to the Locker reading room.

Below, the green space between MemChurch and Widener is the Tercentenary Theatre, the navel of Harvard Yard. Crimson banners bearing the shields of the faculties and schools of the university will drape from poles around the Tercentenary Theatre next week in celebration of the 365th Commencement.

Perhaps it is only apt that this space, between what are considered centers of faith and knowledge, teaching and learning, is where commencements and convocations are held.

Six months ago, Ethan, Ramin, Monty, Kevin, William, Jian and I were standing right there at the Tercentenary Theatre, having our photos taken with the Widener Library as the background. We took those crazy photos while donning the ever-recognizable Xavier high school uniform in the freezing cold of Cambridge fall as winter approached from around the corner. That same day was when the team presented to an audience at Harvard Social Innovation Collaborative's 2015 Igniting Innovation Summit. At the same summit, the team

was also featured, recognized and named the 2015 Harvard Social Innovation Collaborative Global Trailblazers for their project, TalkED — a platform to help preserve and enable learning of the world's indigenous languages.

Much like the countless number of languages that exist in the world, our experiences and learning during the trip were countless. While it might take a series to cover everything, we present some of the highlights of the trip in this anthology. Ahead of the full version, we're publishing this book teaser to provide a preview of what's to come.

These pages are far from complete. In the next few chapters, you will find snippets of our adventure, mixed together with reflections, stories and some figments of our students' imagination. Note that this entire publication should be considered a working draft. Much like staring out a window, this book teaser provides snapshots into the events of and from the trip, and how they've shaped our lives.

This book teaser is composed of eight chapters — each narrating a unique part of our trip. The eight chapters remind me of John F. Kennedy's book, *Profiles in Courage*, the 1957 Pulitzer Prize-winning compilation of acts of bravery and integrity by eight U.S. Senators throughout history. Is it any wonder, that JFK himself is a graduate of Harvard College, who the school is most proud of? Needless to say, the lives and stories of these students are also of bravery and integrity.

These students braved an almost 20-hour flight from Manila to the US East Coast, before flying across continental U.S. to head over to California, then cross the Pacific to head back home.

Coinciding with the publishing of this book teaser on

Trinity Sunday, the Xavier School Class of 2016's International Baccalaureate Diploma Program cohort will have just finished their external exams, and will have just attended their closing program to finally bid goodbye to their alma mater.

This goodbye is rather significant as this batch is the last to be called High 4 in the school's history, and the last ones to wear patches bearing the roman numeral IV above their name tag and school seal on their uniform — the same uniform they wore while at Harvard.

Strolling around Harvard Yard will never be the same again. We recall the guarded and stern stance of the Widener Library staff, ensuring that no tourists sneak in for no reason; we recall the prayers and concerts in Memorial Church where spirits are lifted in times of most need; we recall Michael Sandel's lecture on lookism as part of his Money, Markets and Morals class at Sanders Theatre in Memorial Hall, followed by CS50 by David Malan in the same venue.

While Harvard was definitely one of the highlights, I'd like to believe that the trip was enriching and enlightening for all the students and myself, regardless of where we went.

This Fall, when we yet again escape from the tropical summer heat, Ethan and Ramin will find themselves as freshmen at Stanford. Kevin will find himself exploring economics, while Monty will be starting his adventure in the Huntsman Program, both at the University of Pennsylvania. Jian and William have yet to confirm their choices for university, from a range of offers they've received.

As these folks begin a new chapter in their lives, may they always find a home where their heart is. May we, in all what we do, continue to seek our truths, to find our *veritas*. May we

always let our light shine.

Perhaps, someday, sometime, we'll all meet again ...
Elsewhere.

Luceat Lux!

18 May 2016
Locker Reading Room
The Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts





Vancouver International Airport.

Transit Passenger

Paki-sauli ang
tamtamang ito
pagsakay ninyo sa eroplano.

Please surrender
this card upon
reboarding aircraft.

返機時請交回此證

Transit Passenger

Paki-sauli ang
tamtamang ito
pagsakay ninyo sa eroplano.

Please surrender
this card upon
reboarding aircraft.

返機時請交回此證

ARRIVALS

by Ethan Zachary L. Chua

All airports are the same. All share the same movement and rush, hands reaching into pockets for passports, untying shoelaces, folding boarding passes. All are designed for motion; from point A to point B, departure terminal to arrival, all airports are walkalators, long hallways, corridors, shuffling feet until the exit doors.

Matthew takes the longest at immigration, while William and I wait for him on cold airport benches. Even this slight delay is felt in the checking of watches and timepieces, the rush forward almost systematic in its push – the way the immigration officer says nothing to William as he walks by, waves him in, takes his fingerprints, signals with his eyes for him to move on.

The officer behind my counter has heavy-set eyes and wrinkles; she speaks with a booming New York accent, perhaps the first reminder that I've left Manila behind. She asks about my purpose of travel, and I bring up the Harvard competition (as of now, still not knowing how worn that story will soon sound). At this, she asks – “Harvard? I hear you, I hear you,”

and congratulates me. Whenever I answer her questions – age, place of departure, accompanying guardian – she responds with that same “I hear you, I hear you,” until the phrase is what I bring with me past the counter and onto the steel benches, a reminder to break the assembly-line monotony of airport check-ins and check-outs.

It’s all I can do, this first step of the journey – waypoints don’t lend themselves to grand landmarks or sweeping views. Instead, the small edges and curves that shape out the road catch my eye – the used arrival card that Mr. Gomez attempts to fill up; the Filipino-looking couple a few rows from us in line; a cardboard box decorated with Sharpie ink on the conveyor belt where we claim our luggage.

All airports are different: the temperatures, the humidity, the number of kiosks in the departure terminal. The details, however, sink in slowly. I order a coffee, and the straw sinks all the way to the bottom of the cup. There’s something called an Oprah Tea Latte – I avoid that and go for something more familiar. Jian orders a pepperoni pizza for breakfast and manages to only finish one slice. The WiFi speed registers in megabytes, not kilobytes; in the center of the food court is a large, bare circle of tiles which I mistake for a lower floor. I walk across its circumference and feel afloat.

The complimentary airport connection lasts only thirty minutes, establishing another makeshift routine as we all pull out our laptops and connect, Jian first and the rest following suit. Matthew and I move to a side table that seats two and barely has room for our computers, the edges of our keyboards ever so slightly off the metal countertop.

On the flight to New York from Vancouver, I fall asleep on the plane ride before takeoff, wake up right after landing. Part of me wishes that the rest of the trip would be an echo of that: a runaway fragment, a waking dream. I love flights for this – the way they unmoor you from soil. I hate arrivals.

—

We arrive on a Sunday; on Thursday, applications to the University of Illinois are due. Though we've joked about all the schoolwork that we'll be missing, reminders crop up in group chats and Facebook notifications, little pieces of home that I would rather have left behind. In the New York terminal, I realize I am least afraid in that space before touching down onto the runway – so I turn off the messages, the dial tones. I am glad when the thirty minutes of WiFi run out, and I leave the 550 word essay unfinished.

The place in-between continues to haunt my thoughts, and I never fully leave the airport's threshold.





The apartment in East Village, New York where we stayed.



VERTIGO

by Ethan Zachary L. Chua

On the way out from the airport, Mr. Gomez calls an Uber. We pile into the car, sneak our luggage into the trunk and make our way towards the apartment on 3rd street. Small divisions begin to make sense. An UberXL carries up to six, enough for our group right now: five students and their teacher, Monty having been left behind for a week to catch up on his school days.

When we leave the overpasses and sprawls of the airport gate – the pedestrian lanes painted wide for baggage, the tuxedoed men holding up signs for hotels and motels – New York begins to unfold itself. It starts with the washes of new colors; orange and brown leaves crown the trees that line the roadway to our hotel. It is autumn.

There are old billboards and signposts whose backs are littered with graffiti – exaggerated typefaces, vaguely religious slogans, swear words. The edges of flyovers are covered with spray painted letters, which reach their tendrils below bridges and onto concrete columns, impossible corners. The graffiti artist must be dextrous beyond measure, reaching

into the nooks of alleyways and height-defying corners; seven stories up, someone finds enough worth in plastering fading propaganda over the backboards decaying advertisements. New York presents two faces of itself, and we approach from the one populated by nocturnal dashes of color, spray cans strewn on sidewalks, police sirens chasing away prey.

Or is it only two faces of a city as vast as the one we now make our winding way through? Only two faces of a metropolis of insomniacs and lost souls, three in the morning pharmacy prescriptions and old Broadway stars left waiting tables, receipts signed with aged autographs and cracked whispers? But the color and acrylic hue that bounces off the stones of these New York streets is more than an aspect hidden by the light, more than the tail-end of a coin we approach from an airport driveway. It makes me wonder at a city that seems so suffocated by the looming skyscrapers that populate its view, whose sharp angles and rigid geometries cannot constrain the soul of a living breathing raging dying people.

No other city in the States will have the same splashes of paint on bricks and walls, iron gates barring exhibits for the public display of graffiti enshrined as art – in Pennsylvania, later on, the colors will come from the falling leaves of trees on brick buildings; in Boston, the colors from the oncoming fog of sea, or the warm hues of lobster and seafood soup; but only in New York are all these colors acrylic-polystyrene-aerosol-chrome, born into shape by paint issued from metal cans, shakers, the sound of steel balls clattering against cylinder-walls and the bandanna-masks of artists who shrink back into jackets, hoodies, denim, disappearing into the shuffling crowds.

Far be it from me to document the life of a city from an outsider's view – instead, perhaps, these strokes of art or

artless paint revealing a turbulent part of the whole – New York, intersection-point of migrants, travelers, and elsewhere-wanderers like ourselves whose souls and hopes cannot be trapped within grey concrete construction. I imagine Arab immigrant fathers rushing out with their sons underneath neon Broadway signs late at night, paint cans in hand, breathing out with each exhalation of paint onto concrete the long frustration of a people; imagine Asian-American high schoolers sneaking out their bedroom windows and into the vastness of the dark, armed with stencils and paintbrushes, red caps and tinted sunglasses, but behind their denim-leather armors only armed with hormones and puberty and hesitant cries of rebellion; imagine the diasporic motion of their souls, their feet, their fingertips mirrored by the Brownian shift of flecks and particles of aerosol-paint.

More than any other city New York is home to wanderers.

At this point, the Camry drives by a wall covered in ivy vines and flowers which have been pressed onto the concrete by rough winds. The image from the car window's tint is akin to an old Japanese wood print, cherry blossoms rendered onto canvas by the brush of autumn gales. The vines reach out like blood vessels, like crossroads. I imagine tracing my finger against the twigs and thorns, but only for a moment – then the car rushes by, and I am faced with drywall again.

—

There's a small rush of panic as I unload my bags from the trunk of the Uber – cars piling up on the narrow stretch of road that leads up to the apartment, horns honking. As I edge my luggage to the sidewalk, a man who looks a bit older than twenty approaches our group with a warm smile. He introduces himself as Brajaraj, but offers Brennan as his

nickname. Brennan owns the apartment space we'll be renting out for our stay in New York, and he says his wife's still fixing up the rooms.

In the meantime, we make small talk. Brennan, it turns out, is from Hawaii, though he's moved to New York looking for work and has made a decent living out of renting his apartment through Airbnb. When William asks about his odd-sounding name, Brennan tells us he's a Hindu – he converted after going on a spiritual pilgrimage in India for a year.

The apartment is framed by a glass door with a paper sign scotch-taped onto it, reading, "Please don't sit on our neighbor's bench." The bench in question is small, wooden, and unremarkable; it turns out, however, that the bench is owned by the local Hell's Angels gang, who have their headquarters right next to the apartment we've rented out. Apparently, I'd missed the black door with the flaming skull painted on it on the way inside.

Our unit is on the top floor, which means we have easy access to the roof deck – immediately, stargazing comes to mind. But then, the top floor also means five flights of stairs to navigate with our luggage in tow, and we're all exhausted after lugging our bags all the way to our unit. I give up by the third floor, and Ramin has to step in and grab my bag for me. Mr. Gomez, who has a heart condition, hangs back.

The room itself is remarkably spacious – there's a makeshift double bunk bed, with the top bunk almost touching the ceiling. Ramin and I take that one, while Kevin, Jian, and William occupy the lower bunk, which has a mattress they immediately sink into. Our small arrival routine is established – Mr. Gomez gets the WiFi, Kevin, William, and Jian remain on the mattress, Ramin unpacks his bags and checks on Mr.

Gomez's things, I check the pantry for food (I find a few plastic bags filled with Oreos, which somehow taste different in the States).

Then, after settling in, we head upstairs with Brennan to look at the roof deck. There's a view of the New York skyline: the Empire State is most prominent, even this early in the morning. Jian walks over to the edge of the roof deck and hangs his legs over the fire escape; I stare over that edge and find the lower roofs of adjacent apartments, peer across the landscape until I get vertigo. It's the old feeling – a fear of heights, which I later on realize is a fear of the ability to jump. Kierkegaard's dizziness of freedom – apt for the city we're in, where every corner seems to be filled with taxicabs, street lights, ragged choices.

The roof deck connects the apartment we're renting out to the one beside it; Brennan uses a chair to prop up his ascent and makes a short jump over to the other side to head to his unit. I spend a little longer staring down from the angles the rooftop offers. To the left of our building, there's a grey enclosure – a garbage heap surrounded on all four sides by walls, a small no-man's land in the middle of the city. These suffocated spaces are on view throughout our trip to New York, closed off by steel-grated gates and windows, brick walls marking boundaries between homes and wilderness. And there is wilderness here, hiding on the fringes of a city with two faces; or perhaps not on the fringes, but twined within the vessels of the metropolis, close to its beating heart.





With Arnold Lau ('09) at Columbia University.



COLUMBIA

by Ethan Zachary L. Chua

Our first campus visit is to Columbia University, and we head out after spending a few more minutes on the roof deck. We take a long drive to get to Columbia, which is somewhat far from the center of the city. In Columbia, we meet Arnold Lau, a former Xaverian who is taking his Masters in Quantitative Economics in the university. He looks Chinese, and can still throw out a few Filipino words - albeit with a heavy American accent. And he has an easygoing attitude, though he's not so playful as to join William and Jian in their constant barbs.

Arnold brings us around Columbia, which was one of my first choices for dream universities. Walking on campus shocks me back into thoughts of the future - after all, this is the first American university I'm setting foot on, and I'm going to be spending the next four years of my life in a space like this. The realization hits in only when we're already quite a distance from the entrance gate.

There's a square in Columbia. On its left side you can face Minerva's golden statue and the administration building; on its right is one of the school's largest libraries (it has, if I'm not

mistaken, almost ten of them.) The buildings are imposing - the edges of their rooftops have Latin words carved into them, and their facades are framed by Greek columns and large, swinging doors. Everything speaks of erudition, of a constant search for wisdom, like the freshman tradition of perusing the folds of Minerva's robe for the owl hidden underneath.

It's tough not to fall for the appeal. The open spaces of Columbia are a strange contrast to the urban entanglement of New York, and it can't help but feel like a haven. The place feels lived in - undergraduates are having lunch on the steps, and in the middle of the square a few have set up a makeshift Day of the Dead altar and are chatting with passersby. Still, the campus buildings loom heavy over the square, casting large shadows.

I can't help but wonder what it would be like to study here - to live here - to spend years here, wandering around the library which we're not allowed to enter, having lunch on the stone steps, rushing into the glass office beside the bookstore to buy discounted Broadway tickets. These small centers of life, worlds within worlds, remind me of the airport terminals: people still in constant transit in the crossroads of the Columbia square. But the rush is not the same; amidst the activity, there is a quiet to be found in those more distant spaces - a couple, lying on the far corners of the steps, could steal kisses unawares.

But to breathe and walk, always, within the shadows of the Greek columns? At night, I can imagine Minerva's gaze growing stern, the statue a brooding presence, the corridors of stone and brick becoming long and inviting ghosts. The old library's tomes ruffling in unseen winds, wood and concrete creaking with the weight of centuries' history.

They brush the airport's floors clean, but stones invite memory. Tiles are marked, worn with footprints and cigarette butts, blackened patches suggesting ash - smoke, fire. Perhaps, in the soil, sprinklings of chalk dust - small scents of alcohol - the hushed whispers of a teacher, a student - exchanged notes - affairs - old spectres spread out across a hundred years.

Arnold brings us to the bookstore, where Ramin and I immediately go over our daily budgets. I buy a collection of poetry, short stories, and a novel by Orhan Pamuk - a Nobel Prize winning author who, apparently, is also part of the Columbia faculty. There's no lack of star faculty members like these in the Ivy Leagues; their footsteps, too, wear on the stone tiles we walked by - are the marks their soles make heavier on the ground?

In the end, we don't spend too long in Columbia. We make our way out by a nondescript gate on the side of the road.

—

Leaving Columbia makes the atmosphere seem to weigh less heavy with the past. There's something about the sprawl of New York - the sheer presence of activity - that makes history's grip seem tenuous outside the walled institutions of universities whose brochures proclaim hundreds of years of excellence. In the metropolis, the flurry of feet and the flash of Union Square lights are slowly erasing the past, and a city that never sleeps has no room in its thoughts for reflections on footsteps gone by. The here and now assaults every sense.

In small ways, we feel this presence seep in, even in the way Kevin mistakes the red sauce in Halal guys for ketchup. Ramin and I follow suit, pouring mounds of it onto our orders of chicken and beef, and immediately regret the burning

sensation within our mouths. The only answer for the heat is to drown it in more flavor - I fill the paper plate to the brim with mayonnaise and wash what I can down with Coke, keeping the cold drink in my mouth as long as I am able to. Then William and Jian, who've successfully avoided the red sauce, manage to finish their meals though they're the only two in the team who do. Sensation, excess, and covered paper plates left on public fountains, soft drink cans set aside and long lines winding their way through streets and onto the counters of food carts, the city slowly unravels itself into the blood of every onlooker, the breath of every tourist. Perhaps this is what it means to travel - to change, unknown to even yourself, with each step taken in a strange world.

—

There's no checklist for settling into a new space, but our group's small routine makes for a comfort in the sprawl. We make our way to an AT+T shop in the middle of the city with only three chairs available; Ramin stands to the side while the rest of us take turns. An Italian-sounding American named George comes over to help us with our SIM cards, and his voice fills the room as he narrates the features of each data plan. We're about to discover the wonders of US data, though we don't know it yet; data, before our AT+T trip, recalls an eternal refreshing of Messenger and countless frustrations at unsent messages. But then one look at the plan's numbers and even George's voice is unnecessary to have us in wonder - 4 Gigabytes of high speed Internet for the most expensive plan, a far cry from the measured-in-megabytes Philippine plans we're used to.

George seems to notice our enthusiasm, and we trade stories - we tell him about our recent foray into Halal Guys, while he tells us about phone plans, SIM cards, and his job as

a customer service representative. By the end, Mr. Gomez has bought a new handset to avail of a plan since the phones he has (he brought several over) don't support them. Before we leave, George asks us with an earnest voice if he was a five-star customer service rep, and we say yes just as earnestly. I find it strange, though, to have to assess the man we just met according to a numerical scale - his stories, his accent, and his booming voice seem to lie on a different axis than the five stars he insists on. Perhaps he's asking this on the command of higher-ups, but that seems unlikely; George's earnestness seems genuine, and this is what intrigues - even disturbs - me. Perhaps the exchange of goods leads to a commodification of the hands with which they are bought and sold, men and women traded quietly as we walk out the doors of a New York AT+T stall and back into the wider world of a city where I thought history held no sway, realizing now that its veins are drawn deeper than the footsteps and cigarette butts I saw sprawled on the Columbia grounds.

—

Our steps that night end up treading New York until late, and I search fruitlessly for a bathroom by a giant skating rink that takes up the autumn scenery of an otherwise colorless urban landscape. Eventually, our group stumbles upon the golden facade of 30 Rockefeller Center, which we wander into on the pretext of tourism when in fact I just really need to use the bathroom. It's funny how I find the golden walls and plastered TV network posters so intimidating, yet realize that seven strangers are admitted by the security guards without a second glance into the lobby and the lower floors, where elevators promise the Late Show with Jimmy Fallon and glass doors are labelled with television series and the names of celebrities.

Then, we drop by St. Patrick's Cathedral, whose wide doors open upon a golden statue of Atlas as the weight of the world bears down upon him. This Atlas is a minimal figure, composed of spindly arms and legs, and his globe is hollow, epicycles inlaid with metal like Ptolemy's old model of the planets or Rutherford's atom. I wonder how it must feel to exit the cathedral after mass and find oneself confronted by a figure from an older creation story with crueller gods, with giants who must suffer by earth forced upon their shoulders until eternity. Here all the contradictions come alive, subdivided by a bustling street, and the strangeness of it eludes me until I sit down in my room to think on Atlas, the Greek titan, holding up Rutherford's atom in front of Christ's church. There is something to be found in all the images and symbols that I take for granted walking along the superhighways of New York, something to be found in the mixture of old and new, of science and faith, where nothing really settles - everything in motion, even the stillest statues reflecting the unease of a greater city.



Interior detail of St. Patrick's Cathedral.



REGIS HIGH SCHOOL



With Fr. Ian Gibbons, SJ, Assistant Principal of
Regis High School, New York.

O'NEILL, S.I.
DOMÍNGUEZ, S.I.

ONARIO
HISTÓRICO
DE LA
COMPAÑÍA
DE JESÚS

BIOGRAFICO-
TEMÁTICO

I

COSTA RICA



UNIVERSIDAD
PONTIFICIA COMILLAS

CHARLES E. O'NEILL, S.I.
JOAQUÍN M.^a DOMÍNGUEZ, S.I.

DICCIONARIO
HISTÓRICO
DE LA
COMPAÑÍA
DE JESÚS

BIOGRAFICO-
TEMÁTICO

III

INFANTE DE SANTIAGO - PIATKIEWICZ



INSTITUTUM
HISTORICUM, S.I.



UNIVERSIDAD
PONTIFICIA COMILLAS

CHARLES E. O'NEILL, S.I.
JOAQUÍN M.^a DOMÍNGUEZ, S.I.

DICCIONARIO
HISTÓRICO
DE LA
COMPAÑÍA
DE JESÚS

BIOGRAFICO-
TEMÁTICO

II

COSTA ROSSETTI - INDUSTRIAS



INSTITUTUM
HISTORICUM, S.I.



UNIVERSIDAD
PONTIFICIA COMILLAS

CHARLES E. O'NEILL, S.I.
JOAQUÍN M.^a DOMÍNGUEZ, S.I.

DICCIONARIO
HISTÓRICO
DE LA
COMPAÑÍA
DE JESÚS

BIOGRAFICO-
TEMÁTICO

IV

PIATTI - ZW



INSTITUTUM
HISTORICUM, S.I.



UNIVERSIDAD
PONTIFICIA COMILLAS

MISSION

by Ethan Zachary L. Chua

Feet shuffle forward onto boats, beaches; fingers rest on soft wood. The crucifixes were carved, I imagine, in the heartlands of Rome - perhaps a tall oak placed far from the edge of the Tiber? But now the grains and long sheets of tree bark find their way onto foreign shores. The missionaries here are far from home, and every squall of water with the tide shakes the prow of their unsteady skiff.

I imagine one is named Francis, and as such is the group's bearer of bad luck on this voyage; ever since birth, he's carried history's weight on his shoulders, and a name like his does not go amiss among his Christian company. Francis is tired, and every time his name is brought up he recalls the countless scoldings he received while in novitiate, elder priests admonishing him for not living up to the pasts of his storied namesakes.

His skin is sunburnt and unused to the heat of the East Indies, and two members of his crew are in the lower cabin of the ship. The doctor on board with them suspects yellow fever from the pale tinge of their skin, but does not share his

suspensions with the rest of the company. After nearly two months at sea, no one is in the mood for added burdens, and Chrys, the de-facto leader of the company, is at this point the only one left keeping up an air of enthusiasm for the Lord's good news.

Francis has spent the last few mornings on the ship's prow, waking up before dawn to try and catch the first rays of the sunrise. The expanse of the sea leaves little change in scenery, so Francis has taken to observing the small shifts in the colors of the sky instead. He remembers how, on the first horseback ride away from Rome, the brick-laned towers of the city shifted into countryside ruin, and longs then for land.

But a few hours after sunrise, the sky takes on the same stillness as the sea, until both seem to mirror one another. The days are mostly cloudless, and though this spells good news for the lookouts stationed at each raised mast of the boat, Francis hangs on to grey wisps and watches nimbus clouds make their slow way along the horizon with an almost hungry excitement.

And on the days which seemed perfect on the first weeks of their voyage - cloudless, sunny, sky blue days with still waters ahead of the boat - Francis is especially bored. At these times, he goes to the lower decks for company and finds himself trading stories with Victor, the thin interpreter who, after being baptized, decides to join the roving crew of missionaries.

Victor is a trader from the Philippine islands, and his brown-tanned skin distinguishes him from the rest of the European crew. He's run into missionaries before, Franciscans from Spain, and has a limited grasp of various foreign languages - harsh Mandarin syllables after trading with intrepid Chinese salesmen bringing ceramics and silk, and flowing Bahasa from the nearby Indonesian isles. Francis enjoys his conversations

with Victor, whose stories never fail to enthrall despite the latter's limited command of English; where his vocabulary fails, Victor resorts to sweeping gestures and intricate signs, occasionally grabbing a scrap of paper to draw crude maps and boundaries.

The stories Victor tells rival the vastness of the outside ocean, and Francis, who from youth has only read the Bible and the lives of the saints, sits in near rapture. Victor tells him of a tribe of bloodthirsty headhunters who occupy the northern mountains of the Philippines, recalls the copper coins they used to pay him for his handiwork. Then his words weave straw and mud together into nipa huts, wide villages, farmers muttering ancient prayers when crossing by balete trees. Secondhand, the fairy tales of faraway Goa and Mongolian lands merge into a miasm of monsters and seven-handed nightmares; aswang and centaurs hunt the young missionary down in sloped rice terraces and grassy fields.

And Francis tries to sway Victor's attention with stories of home, but Rome's high walls and sweeping towers seem to only bore the interpreter. Then the magical tales Francis spins inevitably end up the work of Christ or Holy Ghosts, and Victor laughs at the morals handed down to him by virgin births. Francis wonders what the baptism the company gave him on the shores of Goa meant to the thin translator, whether the waters they submerged him in were populated by visions of sirens and mermaids with sharp fangs.

When the wooden skiff touches on the shores of Mactan, and when the company of Jesuits is greeted by a small battalion of Cebuano men with a datu at their head, Victor's stories ring within Francis's thoughts, and the memorized verses he peddles from John's Gospel seem almost empty. But Chrys, the leader of the group, pays his hesitance little thought, and

soon a rapport is established between the local datu and the visiting group. Victor smiles at the whispered exchanges of the datu's men, and mischievous light seems to glint in his eyes with every relayed Bible verse, as if the rolling syllables of his tongue add dwarves and heroes in, almost by accident.

The sun beats heavy on Francis's long robes as he reenters the moored boat to rest, a day of missionary's work complete.

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In Regis, a large high school campus located in upstate New York, we are greeted by a missionary of a different kind - with blonde hair and dull grey eyes, Fr. Ian Gibbons gives us a tour around the campus of his high school. After he opens the imposing doors that frame the entrance of the school, we wander down the marble and stone corridors which leave no trace of any students ever passing by. Our first real stop is the school chapel, where ornate, varnished pews frame a bejeweled altar. Fr. Ian tells us about Regis High School, which sponsors one hundred percent of its students' tuition fees, accepting only Roman Catholic boys who have performed at the top of their grade school classes. He tells us that Regis has the third-highest average score for the SATs in the entire United States; is, nationally, the highest ranked Jesuit high school; regularly sends students to Ivy League campuses - Harvard, Stanford, and Princeton, to name a few; has recently had an alumnus awarded the Nobel Prize. Fr. Ian says all this with a subtle pride, and the tone his voice takes on is strange - a mixture of a salesman's pitch and a preacher's rhetoric. With his large frame and dull grey eyes, he looks most at home in a director's chair, supervising the administration of a burgeoning high school. When we exit the chapel and he begins our tour of the campus, every so often a student wearing a starched and buttoned polo will pass him by and mutter a polite greeting,

which Fr. Ian answers with a small smile.

The weight of history behind his name does not seem to appreciably bother Fr. Ian, whose idea of history is instead tied to the marble and stone hallways of his school. He memorizes all the relevant numbers, statistics, and talking points, politely pointing out Regis's educational features. The social studies faculty workroom is, instead of an isolated space, a "learning center" where both students and teachers can mingle in the same room. Fr. Ian tells us that on recess and lunch breaks, students make their way to learning centers to discuss projects and lessons with their professors. No mention is made of what Regis high school students do with their free time.

And this Fr. Ian keeps a brisk pace through the hallways of his school, but his shuffling feet seem confined to Regis's corners and corridors. He reminds me of old tales of sprites bound to the guardianship of their lands, though Gospel must have traveled far from Rome to lay its bricks and stones onto the acres of upstate New York. What winds carried the missionary Francis' sailboat to East Asian shores seem stilled here, as with the closing of a long journey, or the doldrums of a once-violent past.

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The old Jesuits were travelers - sailors, explorers, perhaps even warriors. Mapmakers and tradesmen, translators and writers, bearers of a storied history whose feet were unfixed. Movement, like the rush of high school students to an arrival terminal, but with a solemnity to its proceedings. Always a mission, a compass point to what lies ahead.

But what travel goes on within the walls of marble schools like Regis, foundations fixed and students shuffling within

narrow corridors? And even the widest campuses, sprawling rooftops and university-funded observatories still shackles for a history of motion? Still the monuments of towering school building doors recall the churches of old, Jerusalem temples, now the jeweled spires of Iglesia ni Cristo-built affairs - Peter, you are the rock upon which I will build my church. The Acts - his travels across Israel and desert sands - yet a rock? A foundation?

Perhaps underneath the columns of these schools is a faith of movement, a prayer to a changing world and an unchanging God. Or perhaps this is the proving ground of faith, which thrives in contradictions: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; a virgin birth; a fixed star upon the mobile story of a Messiah.

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But Francis, our missionary, has fled from his wooden ship as Victor pulls him along by his robes towards market. Chrys and the other missionaries are still asleep this early in the morning, and Francis, now on the edge of the land where Victor's own stories make their home, is eager to leave the confines of the skiff - even the confines of ritual baptisms, masses, and Gospel readings. His mind is filled with images of tattooed tribesmen, mischievous spirits, wares from India and China and colored carpets from the Middle East. And as Victor leads him to the main harbor of Mactan island, Francis catches the tips of flowing sails that show, first, as shadows against the oncoming sun's rays. But as the pair moves closer the boats seem to fill up his whole view, blocking even the expanse of the Pacific Ocean with their cloth and string; their towers with perched lookouts leaning halfway past wooden railings, telescopes fixed; their curved prows, inlaid woodwork, vampiric mastheads with wooden fangs sharp enough to prick a curious onlooker's finger.

The ships have laid anchor at varying distances from the shore, and men, women, and children of varying races all make their way towards the beachfront. Many of the men and women have baskets of brimming porcelain and silk perched on their heads, while the children rush past them and dive into the shallow portion of the sea, screaming and splashing water onto their fabric rags. One man, who seems a father, yells out curtly in a guttural language Francis does not understand, and a group of children stop at his command; the water at this point reaches up to the shoulders of the youngest, who stares straight at his father despite the seafoam splashing into his eyes. This is a band used to traveling the sea.

Meanwhile, those travelers who have made it to the shoreline are faced with a dispersed row of the datu's men, all tattooed and wielding sharp bolo knives. They are armed, but Francis notes that their expressions are friendly; the leader of the Cebuanos here obviously welcomes trade, but the armed nature of the men suggests the necessity of security. When Francis asks Victor about this, the latter recalls a market raid from seven years ago, when a group of Dutch castaways drunk on the last of their rum rushed, swords raised and armor donned, into the flurry of the marketplace to steal a crate of cured meat from a traveling Indonesian caravan. The datu stepped in personally to resolve the matter, and the blood of the Dutchmen took a few days to be washed fully clean from his spear. From then on, even the more unruly tradesmen adopted an air of reverence whenever the datu entered the market to buy foreign jewels or newly sharpened swords, but the market could not be secured through word-of-mouth alone; as such, on heavy trading days half of the datu's guard would be sent to the shores on patrol.

Within the span of half an hour, Francis watches in

awe as the Mactan beachfront, filled with sand and rock, is transformed into a trading house. The crates and boxes of foreign wares brought in by traders are stacked up against each other and turned into counters and tables. The smell of spices from across the sea - cumin, rosemary, and saffron - mixes in with the salt and earth scent of the traveling men. Francis wonders at how much can be told of a man from his smell - perhaps some tones recall the earthy loam of Mumbai, and other fragrances the rock and hostile soil of Mongolian steppes. Then other travelers still have scavenged wood and iron from tears and fissures within their ships to act as trading tables, walls for the division of stalls, or even chairs to avoid the sharp rocks and seaweed of the beach floor.

Coin changes hands, copper-silver-bronze, even disks of baked earth and clay, everything shifting between skins and rough and foreign voices, the clunk of abacus beads and scrawled marks of ink on stone, papyrus. Victor walks over to the stall of the father Francis saw calling out for his children in the sea. Now that Francis sees him more clearly, he makes out a wisp of a beard and sunburnt skin, wrinkles and callouses on thin fingers; the guttural dialect Francis had heard previously, now in full and fevered exchange between two haggling salesmen. After a several sentences are spoken, Victor tells Francis in slightly stilted Italian that the language being spoken hails from Fujian within China, before returning to his conversation. At its end, Victor hands the Fujian tradesman a few battered coins in exchange for a stack of scrolls, which when unfurled reveal broad, black strokes of expert calligraphy.

Victor moves on, and Francis is about to follow, but something catches the corner of his eye - one of the Fujian tradesman's wares spread out on his makeshift table of spice crates and driftwood. Francis catches the bare outline of

a continent which, from his studies of maps in novitiate in Rome, he makes out to be the traced edge of Russia. Yet wasn't he told in Rome by his superiors that the knowledge of the world's far corners was limited to God and his church? Still this Fujian tradesman's map seems, in some ways, even more exact than the paper relics held in glassware by the Roman churches. Francis wanders over and unfurls the map to trace his fingers over Europe's familiar outline, the contours of Italy's coast, and then his gaze traces out his route, underneath the tipped point of India, and then a lonely stretch of sea, the time he spent hearing Victor spin tales under a too-still sky. The Fujian tradesman smiles warmly at this foreign man's interest, and touches his own fingers against the middle regions of the Philippines; without any words exchanged, Francis understands that the island is meant to be Mactan. And then the tradesman moves his finger across the latitude lines and past the sea, landing onto the edge of a province that Francis guesses to be Fujian.

Then Francis looks again and sees the world entire, whole land masses still unmapped even by the clerics of Rome. To the west, entire continents shrouded in darkness, only imagined islands from the viewpoint of his old church but here, the hypothetical trceries of their shorelines set out in full detail and color. And the details placed, dragons and knights and warriors, black ink brushstrokes marking out capital cities, places known and unknown, dark characters of what must mean danger or warning in Mandarin littering the western landmasses Francis once thought imagined, even told merely as fairytales by Victor on the ship, of the same weight as mermen and aswang. But all that could be real now, with the gift of this map, paper rough underneath the feel of his fingertips, now trembling even without his command?

To be continued ...



• X •

HUMILITY

by Peter Martin D. Gomez

What a truly humbling view.

On the way to #Boston at the #Philly Airport, an elderly lady approached the #TalkED team asking to change a \$1 bill to 4 quarters. Scrambling, the students checked their pockets for quarters. Finding some, the trade was done.

Apparently, the lady wanted quarters because she wanted to make a phone call using the public phone. However, she did not know how to operate the said phone. This prompted her to ask for anyone in the team to help her. The students readily volunteered to do so.

Unfortunately, after several tries, the phone call couldn't seem to be made as there was something wrong with either the number, the phone or the line. Having used up the quarters, there's now a need to find an alternative and try again.

With a very worried look on her face, the team then agreed to enable her to make the call using a mobile phone. She had even insisted to pay for the call made on the mobile phone,

to which the team declined payment. Upon being redirected to voicemail, the lady then began speaking into the phone ... “Hello, Tali. This is mom. My flight got delayed for 6 hours so I won’t be there on time.”

This completely caught me off-guard.

Who knew that a very simple change of quarters and a simple call, would make so much of a personal difference to people’s lives?

Moreover, this made me ask myself how the Xaverian is defined. How does he live the ideals even outside the classroom, even halfway across the globe?

After the call, we fell in line to board the plane and she sat there quietly, patiently waiting for her rescheduled flight to California, with a very big smile across her face.

I suppose that’s all that matters.



With Nichel Gaba ('06) at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.





With Fr. Chrys Exaltacion, SJ, at the Boston College -
School of Theology and Ministry Chapel.



Ethan doing the first reading for the Liturgy of the Word at the Filipino Community Mass.

BOSTON

by Ethan Zachary L. Chua

The story of collapse is imprinted onto the geography of our archipelago. Before fire was brought to the first caves, and before balangay boats landed onto Luzon shores, seven thousand islands split apart from an initial Pangaea, the motion of atoms echoed throughout the splitting of continents.

In my visit to Boston I wonder at the same collapsing scars which we still wear upon our hearts. In Boston College there's a mass for Filipino-Americans, presided over by a Filipino Jesuit who lives in the nearby residence with a multinational group of brothers and priests. Though I do not know the stories of all those who enter through the church's doors I can imagine them.

An overseas worker who migrated to Boston twenty, thirty years ago in search of better work walks in, someone who still wears a heavy winter coat during autumn season; she's used to the cold by now, but remembers her first winter in the States and the greetings over Skype she got from her aging mother and father. She remembers the coat she was wearing when they logged off and holds it close as if to bring

them back to her side.

There's a college student in a hoodie who applied early action to MIT and is taking his sophomore year there. He's huddled on a seat with his earphones plugged in, listening to an album by Arcade Fire. He's always been a star student - international math medalist, expert coder, constant volunteer for charity work back at home - but spending the years on his own has changed him, made him miss the old glow of the Playstation on the condo's seventh floor, the warm smell of pork adobo served over rice. Though his grades are fine, he's never made any real friends since arriving.

Five years old, wearing a small dress and not quite understanding what prayer is yet, she sometimes asks her father whether he misses home. Whenever that happens, he smiles and says there isn't much to miss - the Internet speed's slower, the traffic makes a fifteen minute drive take two hours, typhoons hit every so often and suspend working days. The truth is that they don't have enough to pay the rent, much less to pay for the flight back, so that when her father does miss home he keeps it as a quiet hurt within his chest. So she wears the dress she's always worn, and her father takes out his battered suit, and together they close their eyes anticipating the beginning of the mass.

I'm only here as a visitor - someone who'll be returning home after a few weeks of travel in the United States. Yet somehow here the longing is palpable, even to me; the small rows of chairs are lined up for travelers who are forever lost, wandering on the edges of islands, navigating boats across rivers, discovering new worlds after leaving old. The joy of exploration has long ceased, and there is no promise of land, or gold, or glory. Together they have been forced out as unceremoniously as atoms misaligned and continents

misplaced, landmasses collapsing into their constituent parts. For many moments no one speaks, and it seems these fragments have all been put into view only for a cruel clarity.

But then the mass begins, and the songs are sung in a familiar tongue, hummed to a familiar tune. I remember my high school's own congregation of hundreds of students from various batches singing together, and perhaps other memories enter through the minds of those attending. The overseas worker recalls the prayer before meals her family would always say together before eating, the prayer she still whispers over her food with a bless us O Lord and these thy gifts; the college student recalls his short stint as part of the school choir, harmonizing Amen, amen, amen; the father recalls the way his wife would always pray the rosary in October before tucking their daughter in to sleep, hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with you.

It is in the lilt of familiar songs and the cadence of familiar syllables that loneliness is given meaning for the lost souls left within the church's humble doors. Though they will be leaving with hearts still heavy and hands still lost these small gifts remain. Perhaps memory is all we have when home is far away and hard to return to.

Within our single selves miracles can still occur. We believe that for which we have no proof; we hope for that which we can never obtain; we dream still for the return of those who are lost, those who are long gone, those who never wanted to stay. So it is that I walk out of the Boston church with contradictions bandaging my heart, believing that seven thousand separate islands can still be called a nation; that seventy separate souls who do not know each other's names or faces can still be called a family; that seventy separate chairs, a function room off a Boston hallway, and a secondhand podium

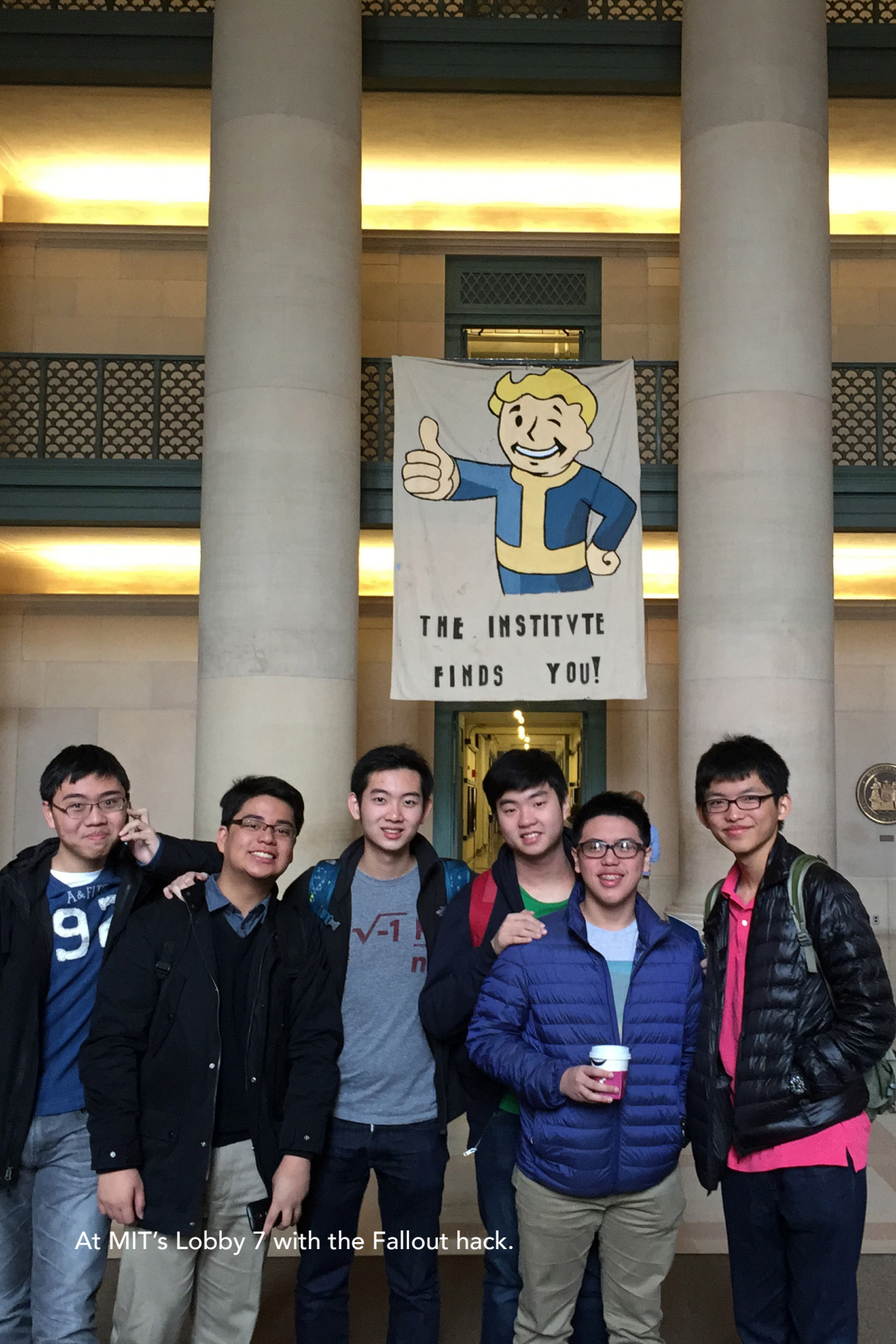
donated by a nearby furniture store can together still be called a home.



Gargan Hall of the Bapst Art Library of Boston College.







At MIT's Lobby 7 with the Fallout hack.

MENS ET MANUS

by Montgomery Nathan T. Ngan

The day started off in a blur, with our team moving from hotel rooms through empty Cambridge streets. Our first glimpse of the MIT campus was the multicoloured Simmons Dorm, after which we came into full view of the Steinbrenner Stadium and Stata Centre. By the time the red sun had given way to clear skies, we were seated in a classroom and given the introductory pitch for prospective MIT applicants. Stepping out of the room—our minds still fresh with stories of roller coasters on East Campus—we headed towards the Stata Centre where we grabbed beef burritos and Arizona tea.

Having finished lunch, our group visited the undergraduate admissions office where we chatted with Mr. Chris Peterson and asked him questions about the application process. After the meeting, we headed to the MIT D-Lab where we were toured around the facilities by an undergraduate student. As we walked through the lab, we were regaled with stories of student driven initiatives in South Africa and Puerto Rico that resulted in various inventions which now lined the walls of the D-Lab. Bicycle powered corn shredding machines were placed alongside makeshift coal compressors and specialised

wheelchairs—reminders of the capacity of service based innovation to drive change in emerging economies.

As our team listened to tales of our guide's various adventures, I noticed that the developmental challenges students at the D-Lab were trying to solve mirrored those we faced in the Philippines. Lack of access to clean drinking water, electricity and fuel are some of the most pressing challenges I constantly face with in the various outreach activities I take part in. Listening to stories of the humble origins of each of the D-Lab's projects reminded me that although my team was halfway around the world, we were facing the same developmental challenges that individuals around the world strive to alleviate.

With thoughts of all these initiatives in mind, the team from the D-lab and met up with Adrian, a friend from St. Jude who is currently an undergrad at MIT. We grabbed ramen and sushi at Thelonious Monkfish and then headed back to MIT to meet up with another Filipino student, Chris Ong. CK had invited us to watch him practise Bring Me to Life by Evanescence with the MIT Chorallaries. After a quick chat with members of his group and a mandatory selfie, the team took an Uber back to the Hampton before calling it a day.

Before falling to sleep, I couldn't help but remember nights spent lying on the grass of the Steinbrenner stadium with summer camp friends. Over four months since I had finished the programme, I could vividly remember conversations held under the starry skies with two of my closest friends. Each of us hailed from differing backgrounds—the Philippines, Taiwan and India—but all were brought together by a shared desire to innovate and impact the world around us. That cool summer night, as we chatted about our pasts, our dreams, and our hopes, I realised that it was the universality of stories

that brought people together. At that moment, the kuwentos we related, though separated by years of cultural and ethnic differences, shared the same longings that pervaded our thoughts. After all, we were dreamers.






With Dr Alvin Chua, MD ('69).

GEORGE EASTMAN

»»»» OF RARE MOULD
FINE GRAINED «««««
»»»» SENSITIVE TO
BEAUTY RESPONSIVE
TO TRUTH CONSERVER
OF HUMAN VALUES
»»»» PIONEER IN THE
SUSTAINED APPLICATION
OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
TO INDUSTRY ««««««««



»»»»»»»»»» FRIEND OF
THE MASSACHUSETTS
INSTITUTE OF TECH-
NOLOGY «««««««« 

Kevin rubbing George Eastman's nose for good luck
after the UPenn admissions interview.

MAGIS

by Kevin Keith W. Tan

On a cold autumn night in Boston, Mr. Gomez, Monty, and I were walking around Harvard Square, trying to find a coffee shop to buy hot drinks from. After finding out that all nearby Starbucks stores were closed at that hour, we decided to call an Uber X and ride to the Dunkin Donuts near our hotel. We waited on the sidewalk for around 5 minutes under the freezing weather, until finally the car arrived and the three of us hopped in.

The usual conversation happened with the Uber driver: he asked us where we were from, and we answered with “Philippines.” But what came next was unexpected, as the driver replied: “same.”

Then, he told us that he studied high school in Xavier.

Mr. Gomez and I couldn’t believe what we had just heard, so we asked the driver again. He told us that he was indeed a Xaverian, class of 1969, and narrated to us about how he lived in Tondo, Manila, close to Banco De Oro. His name is Alvin Chua - he is Chinese Filipino, and is a medical doctor

specializing in internal medicine. After decades of practice, he decided to retire and drive for Uber for fun (to his wife's utter surprise). Prior to retirement, Uncle Alvin had the biggest medical practice in his town.

I was too shocked to speak, but I listened to the rest of the conversation. Uncle Alvin started listing down names of notable Xavier alumni from his batch. He also spoke of faculty legends such as Frs Desautels, Clifford, Pineau, Papilla, Cortina, Zuloaga and Br John Ho, and proving to us that he has blue and gold in his blood. Mr. Gomez knew most of the names, and I remained speechless as the two of them conversed in English, Filipino, and Hokkien, while seamlessly code-switching as most Xaverians do.

When we got back to our hotel, we exchanged contact details and called the rest of the team from their rooms to take a selfie with Uncle Alvin. It was one of the many coincidences in this trip, and a blessing from God: who knew that we'd make a new friend from a random Uber call late at night?

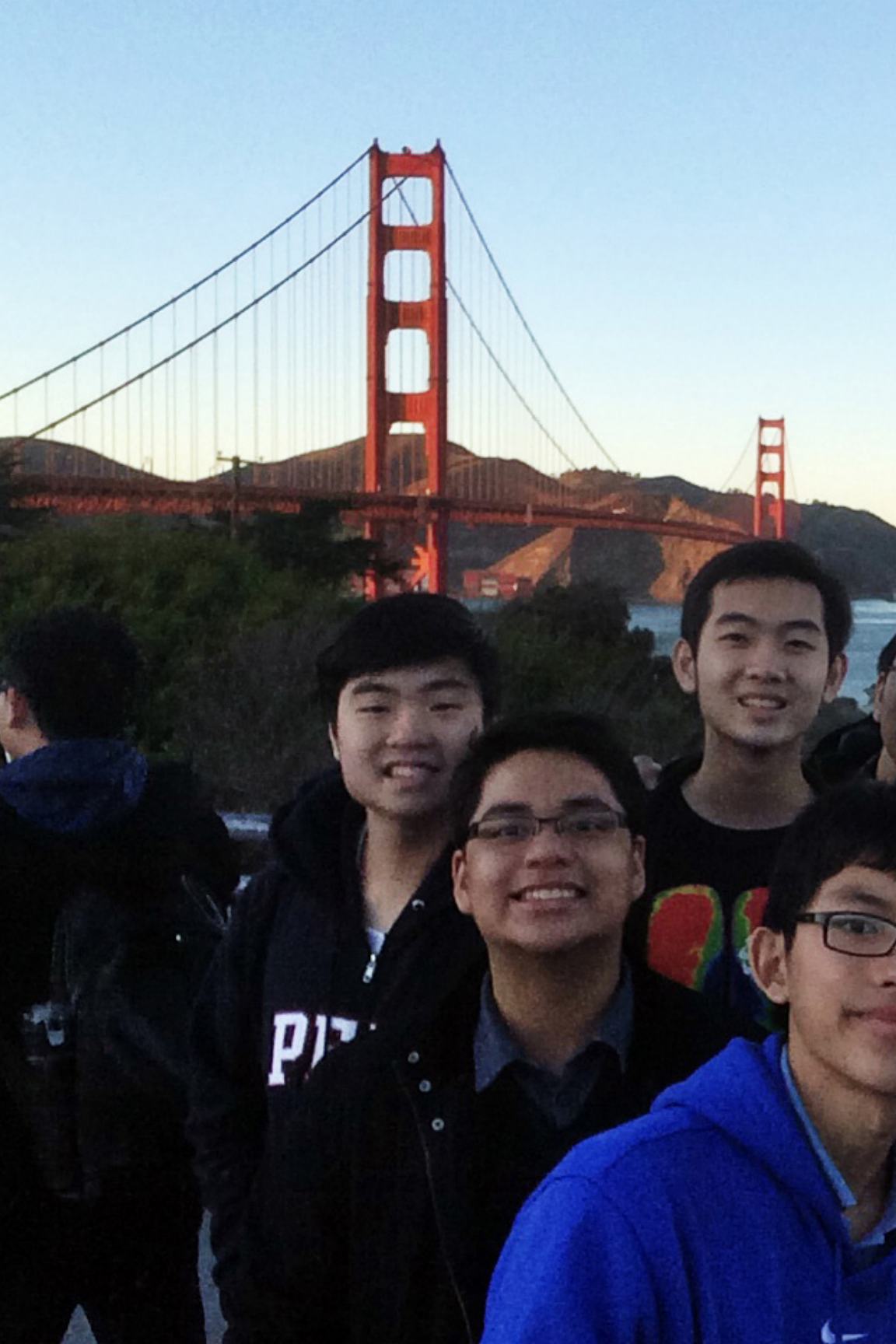
A few days later, Uncle Alvin e-mailed us saying that he'd love to accommodate us before we left Boston. I called him, telling him that the team would love to have dinner with him. The next night, Uncle Alvin came in with an SUV and drove all 7 of us to a restaurant in Chinatown where we ate perhaps the best lobster that Boston had yet to offer us. After dinner, we walked to Northeastern University and watched an orchestra perform classical music.

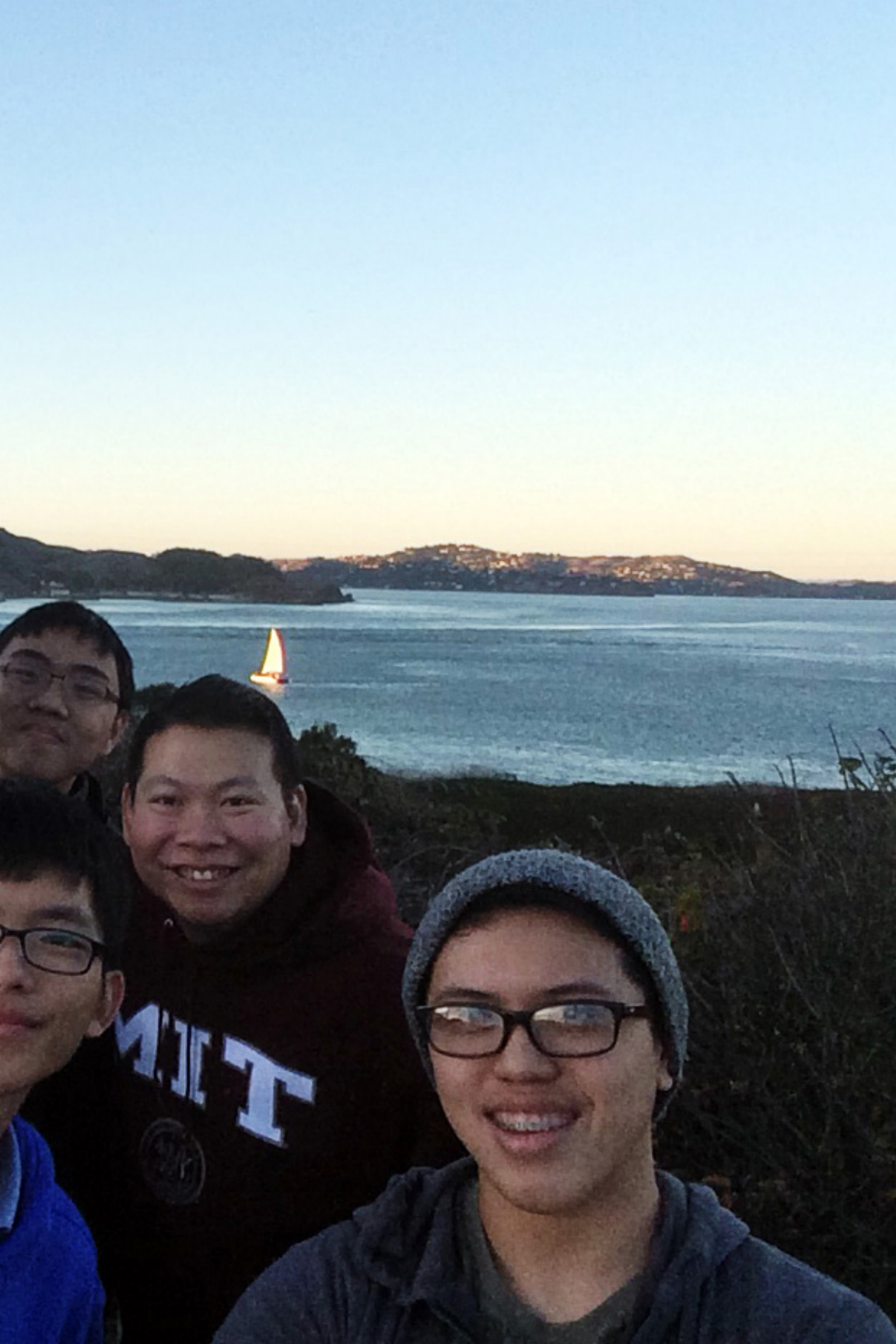
That night, I had to leave the concert early because of a scheduled Alumni Interview that I had for Penn over Skype. Mr. Gomez and I were planning to call an Uber X to drive to MIT (where the internet was strong enough for video conferences), but before we even called for a ride, Uncle

Alvin came to us and offered to drive us there instead. We gratefully accepted it, and thanks to him I was able to arrive a few minutes before schedule.

It still strikes me how everything just fell into place - how we called for an Uber X at the right time and right place, how everything that happened wasn't planned at all, but worked out anyway. Thank you, Uncle Alvin, for making TalkED's stay in Boston much more worthwhile and meaningful - for being with us in our trip, for voluntarily taking us to places, and for making us realize the timelessness of Xaverian Magis.

#UberStories #Uber #UberX #LuceatLux







GOLDEN GATE

by Jian Lorenzo G. Chan

For the latter part of our trip, our team, together with our mentor, Mr. Gomez, flew to San Francisco. Unlike the earlier weeks, we didn't have much of an itinerary during this time. We arrived in our hotel, Hotel Stratford, in the middle of the day, and immediately rode an Uber to visit the Golden Gate bridge. Afterwards, we dropped by In-N-Out for what I believe are the most value for money burgers we've had.

It was nice to relax a little bit. We just finished presenting in the Igniting Innovation Summit. This was now the part of the trip that only existed, because we wanted to make the most out of our time there, especially considering that we were halfway around the world from home. And we did make the most of our trip ... through the food that we eat, of course. Our 4-5 meals a day turned into a habit. I felt my stomach grow about 50% more. I'm certain my shirts and pants felt approximately the same. Joking aside, I always looked forward to seeing San Francisco.

As an aspiring architect, I have always been amazed of how the city of San Francisco was able to establish itself in that kind of landscape. The roads were always inclined. All houses and

buildings seemed to have a side that is exposed more as well. Each structure stood sturdy and seemingly straight on uneven land. Because of this, I chose to walk through the streets alone that night. I told the rest that I'll look at the different shops, but in truth, I only meant to appreciate the city at night. I strolled through the Union Square, noticing how nature was integrated in the city, through small concrete pots of plants, some grass, and trees.

The city did not seem alive like New York. In fact, it felt nothing like New York. The people walked with a bit more ease. The music that played from the different shops and restaurants seemed to be softer, yet more audible from the streets. The city's artificial lights weren't too bright, just enough to brighten up the skyline at night. San Francisco at that point, felt like the perfect city. It felt like a home... at least before I started walking back to the hotel.

As I walked back, I knew to avoid dark and empty streets. I stayed along the main ones in Union Square, using mainly the light from H&M's branch to keep myself away from harm. I then heard a man shouting a few meters ahead. He seemed furious. I didn't understand what he said, but he seemed to be complaining. To avoid getting caught up in whatever mess that was, I crossed to the other side of the street and continued walking. This made my route much longer than it had to be, but safety was on my priority. I started walking faster as well, thinking that the faster I walk, the faster I get back, and the faster I get to safety. Unfortunately, the next pedestrian was on stop for about 30 more seconds, and I had no other choice but to wait. While waiting, this African-American man, possibly around 50-60 years old tapped my shoulder, and while gesturing to his mouth, asked me for some weed.

For about 3 seconds, I did not know what to say. I did

not know if he was asking or demanding. Out of fear, I simply shook my head as a response. He nodded his head and proceeded to ask the person beside me. A sense of relief surged through me, and as the pedestrian light turned green, I walked even faster and practically ran to our hotel.

Inside the room, I took off my jacket and immediately lied than on my bed. Normally, I immediately change into my P.E. shorts and simple T-shirt to prepare for sleep. This time though, I simply couldn't. I laid on my bed, thinking about what just happened, not exactly what happened to me, but rather what happened to the city that I viewed as perfect. It then hit me - perhaps there is no such thing as a perfect city. Cities are the compounded product of human

works, and no matter how hard we try, we all make mistakes. There are always slight inconsistencies. The disagreements, bursts of anger, and complaints won't disappear. At the same time, the society will always have its own imperfections, may it be through drugs, alcohol, abuse, or anything along those lines.

But despite this realization, I still couldn't go to sleep. I still can't seem to find the proper disposition to relax a bit. I guess it may be true that there will always be imperfections, but that does not, in any way, justify the immoral actions that humans do. Somehow, despite accepting the fact that there will always be errors and mistakes, I still want to strive for perfection, for progress and development. I don't mean to be an architect to simply continue the works of the past artists, and at the same time, continue their mistakes. This is especially important now, where a 17 year old like me, who is just about 5'3" may be drug users already. We often refer to the youth as our future. If so, then wouldn't it follow the same logic that harming our youth harms our future? How does this happen even in the

most developed countries. Why is it that so many kids, even back in the Philippines, end up ruining their lives through drugs and alcohol. What happened to the proper education, the proper parenting and guidance? How will we, the youth, even reach our future in one piece, with dreams that expand through the universe and the determination to shake the world?

So many questions but so little answers. So many thoughts but so little actions. So many opportunities but so little taken. Perhaps the world is really a big place, but in the end, how much space we want to cover depends on us. And with that thought, I closed my eyes and went to sleep.





Walking through the covered walkways of Stanford University.

EPILOGUE

by

*Peter Martin D. Gomez,
Jian Lorenzo G. Chan,
John William S. Alonzo, and
Ethan Zachary L. Chua*

[Note from Martin Gomez: The following was delivered by Jian, William, Ethan and myself, when the TalkED Team was presented at the Xavier High School Morning General Assembly last December 4, 2015 at the High School Gym.]

Martin: Last October 31, the TalkED Team composed of following students and I traveled to the United States to represent Xavier School and the Philippines, and present and accept an award from the Harvard Social Innovation Collaborative at Harvard University.

The team had joined the Village to Raise a Child Competition, an international social entrepreneurship competition which asked contestants to come up with viable solutions to social issues, and had won.

Over the course of a few months, the team had to come up

with essays, a video, and do a marketing campaign for public voting for TalkED. Once selected as a finalist, the team had to undergo an interview with a panel from Harvard over Skype. The global competition saw entries from India, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Hong Kong, among others. We were very fortunate to win this competition.

To provide more information about the project and to share insights about the trip, here are Jian, William and Ethan:

Jian: Our team's idea, TalkED.org, is an online language instruction platform created specifically for indigenous languages. The languages of indigenous people are traditionally ignored and marginalized, so we envisioned TalkED as a way to revitalize the use of indigenous languages and subsequently indigenous culture.

William: After winning the competition, our team, accompanied by our mentor Mr. Martin Gomez, traveled to New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Cambridge, San Francisco, and Palo Alto to present to various organizations, gather ideas, and get feedback and support.

Though the main presentation was on November 14 at the Harvard Igniting Innovation Summit, with Mr. Gomez's help, our team was fortunate enough to have been able to also present to the United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Cooper Union, New York University, Boston College, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of California - Berkeley's South and Southeast Asian Studies Department and the UC Office of the President, and Stanford University's design school.

We were further able to explore forging partnerships

between Xavier School with Regis High School (top 3 in the SATs!), Xavier High School in New York, UC Berkeley, MIT, among others.

Ethan: It wasn't the awards or presentations that made our trip most memorable, though - it was the constant kindness and support of the Xavier community, both through the people we interacted with in the States and through the student body, faculty, and administration. At this point, Team TalkED would like to thank all of you for supporting us during the voting round of the competition, the school faculty for their mentorship and support, the administration for approving our trip to present in the US, and everyone for their warm interest in our journey. Abroad, we'd also like to thank the support of Xavier alumni from various universities - graduates and undergraduates from Columbia, NYU, UPenn, Harvard, MIT, Northeastern University, Boston University, Duke University, Santa Clara University, UC Berkeley, and Stanford generously toured us around their schools, had meals with us, and told us stories of life on campus abroad. We also thank those from organizations and companies such as the Society of Jesus, IBM, Google, Box, Wired, Apple and Netapp who spent time touring us and sharing their thoughts and insights with us. We thank our parents for enabling us to have embarked on this journey.

Our deepest gratitude goes out to all of you for your support; our team wouldn't have gotten to where we are without you. Thank you!





*Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not.
Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own.
Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the
stranger.*

*I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my accustomed shelter;
I forgot that there abides the old in the new, and that there also
thou abidest.*

*Through birth and death, in this world or in others, wherever thou
ledest me,*

*It is thou, the same, the one companion of my endless life
who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar.*

*When one knows thee, then alien there is none.
Then, no door is shut.*

*Oh, grant me my prayer,
that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the one
in the play of the many.*

Rabindranath Tagore



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APPENDIX

The TalkED video entry to the
Harvard Social Innovation Collaborative
Village to Raise a Child Competition
may be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lEdDth7Gzvc>

or

<http://xvr.in/6nc>

A recap video of the trip
produced by Kevin
may be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFmUerHu1Bs>

or

<http://xvr.in/jvc>

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